

The Commoner.

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Optimism That is Fatal

"God bless the optimist!" shouts the republican spell-binder. Well, optimism is good when it rests upon a sound foundation; it is bad when it blinds one to approaching dangers. It is one thing to have faith in the ultimate triumph of a cause and quite another thing to ignore reasonable warnings and the lessons of experience. We don't say: "God bless the man who stumbles into a hole without seeing it," or "God bless the man who sleeps while his house is burning." There is a golden (and silver) mean between the doubt that retards healthy progress and the over-confidence that invites catastrophe.

Just now the republicans are very optimistic; they want to "let well enough alone." They represent any suggestion of reverse and scout at the possibility of calamity. They are rushing headlong into new conditions and are leading the country into untried paths. They are sure that we can maintain a republic here and at the same time administer a colony in the Orient, unmindful of the fact that consistency will ultimately compel us to adopt at home the principles which we defend abroad.

They are sure that they can safely encourage the growth of private monopolies notwithstanding the inevitable tendency of man to use power for his own selfish purposes.

They think they can permit watered stock and fictitious capitalization seemingly indifferent to the interests of those who must suffer from unjust rates in order that dividends may be paid on stock that represents no actual investment.

They are giving free reign to the financiers, indifferent to the fact that in all history they have never been known to consider or conserve the interests of the producing masses.

They are allowing United States judges to abuse the writ of injunction when asked against laboring men, while those who violate the anti-trust laws go free, blind to the fact that such discrimination makes more anarchists than all the speeches ever delivered by Herr Most.

Belshazzar was optimistic up to the night of Babylon's fall and the republicans of today are imitating him as closely as possible. Theirs is the fatal optimism that refuses to recognize the logic of events or to apply reason to the affairs of government.

Trusts and the Republican Party.

Will any one be deluded by the hope held out by some republican newspapers that the republican party may be depended upon to give the people relief on the trust question or on the tariff question, or on other questions in which it is to the interest of those who provide the republican party with campaign funds to maintain present conditions?

Republican leaders cannot claim that the failure to provide relief was due to oversight. Democratic members of the house of representatives met in caucus on June 27, and adopted resolutions in which it was charged that the republican majority in congress "is dominated and controlled by the trusts and monopolies which have the great industries of our country in their grasp." These resolutions charged that the republican par-

ty refused and failed "to bring in any measure to suppress the trusts or to favorably report any of the numerous anti-trust bills introduced by democratic members during this session." Then the democratic members resolved:

We favor the immediate passage of a measure to amend the present anti-trust law, so as more fully to protect trade and commerce against unlawful restraints and monopolies, and also a measure to reduce the duties on all articles and commodities manufactured and controlled or produced in the United States by a trust or trusts, so as to destroy such illegal combinations, and to reduce the rate of duty on any article or commodity manufactured in the United States and sold in foreign country more cheaply than in the United States.

We oppose the adjournment of congress until the measures mentioned above have been enacted into law.

The republican congress adjourned. The anti-trust law was not amended. Nothing was done to more fully protect trade and commerce against unlawful restraints and monopolies; nothing was done to reduce the duties on articles and commodities manufactured and controlled or produced in the United States by a trust or trusts, so as to destroy such illegal combinations; nothing was done to reduce the rate of duty on any article or commodity manufactured in the United States and sold in a foreign country more cheaply than in the United States.

The republican congress clearly showed that the arraignment made by the democratic caucus was justified. In the refusal of this congress to provide the people with any of the relief demanded, the republican congress provided proof, if, indeed, proof was necessary, that the republican party "is dominated and controlled by the trusts and monopolies which have the great industries of our country in their grasp."

A Railroad Hold-Up

On another page will be found a cartoon reproduced by the courtesy of the Chicago Record-Herald. It is entitled "Another Railroad Hold-up" and forcibly illustrates a capitalistic scheme that ought to be better understood than it is. Any one who has pursued the study of mathematics far enough to be able to add 2 and 2 together should know that an inflation of stock means, first, that the purchaser buys on a fictitious basis, and, second, that the patrons of the road must be oppressed by extortionate rates to pay dividends upon stock that ought not to have been issued. When watered stock is permitted the holders of such stock become by interest the enemies of the patrons and the public, because having invested their money in the stock they easily convince themselves that rates should be such as to yield dividends, however unfair such rates may be.

The railroad employes are also interested in preventing inflation, for in times of industrial depression the stockholders will be tempted to cut down wages instead of dividends. Such hold-ups as the Record-Herald describes are becoming common and there seems to be no way of arousing a protest so long as the masses are soothed to sleep by the "let well enough alone" argument, but the time will come when the indignation of the people will be aroused and then the remedy is likely to be the more drastic because so long delayed. Those are really the conservative counsellors who advise the immediate application of means calculated to protect the people from injustice.

Amending the Constitution

The Kansas City Journal is offended because in his Nantasket speech Mr. Bryan said that "the republican senate has refused to grant the demand of the people for the election of United States senators by direct vote." The Journal says that this charge was "dictated by ignorance or recklessness."

The Journal first asks, "How did Mr. Bryan learn that the people had demanded the right to elect senators by direct vote?" The fact that with very few exceptions the newspapers of the United States, regardless of political prejudice, are in favor of the election of senators by the people is an indication along this line. The fact that the lower house of congress, a body composed of men who must run the gauntlet of popular investigation every two years, four times adopted a resolution providing for the election of senators by the people is further indication. The indorsement of this plan by republican, as well as by democratic and populist conventions, provide other indications that the people are in favor of the election of senators by the people.

The Journal says that there is a way for the people to enforce this demand if they really desire that this proposed plan be carried out. It points to the provision in the constitution that whenever the legislatures of two-thirds of the states shall make application, congress shall call a convention for proposing constitutional amendments, and the Journal thinks that because this course has not been adopted, the people do not really advocate the proposed change.

If the editor of the Journal would take the trouble to read carefully Article 5 of the constitution, he will discover that it was evidently the impression of the framers that congress would provide for the submission of proposed amendments whenever it became certain that the people favored such amendments. The first provision of this article empowers congress, whenever two-thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, to propose amendments to the constitution. The provision relating to the action of the legislatures of two-thirds of the states was very evidently inserted as a means of forcing congress to act when congress, either through a misunderstanding of the necessity of the situation or a disinclination to act in conformity with the public will, failed to discharge its duty.

The method provided through the initiative of the legislatures is a clumsy one for obvious reasons, the legislatures of two-thirds of the states being required to join in this application. Because the legislatures meet at different periods considerable delay would be necessary in preparing such an application. Then it would be necessary for the application to be submitted to congress, undergoing, as it probably would in a republican congress, considerable delay; and then after congress had acted, a convention would be necessary, not for the adoption of any particular amendment, but for the purpose of proposing amendments, and after all this tedious process the proposed amendments would be submitted to the legislatures; and when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, the proposed amendments would become a part of the constitution.

The advocates of the popular election plan